



Above: Soo Kim, *They Stop Looking at the Sky, I*, 2006, duraclear unique print on Plexiglas, 46" x 60"; below: Mary Temple, installation view at Sandroni.Rey, Los Angeles.

## Soo Kim and Mary Temple at Sandroni.Rey

**B**eauty is subjective, debatable, thorny—maybe even taboo as far as art criticism is concerned. And yet it's out there, lurking in blue shadows and glittering in the sun.

Beauty exists, albeit in some hazy and indefinable place only known to each of us. But if beauty is left to art, it can only exist in the abstract, the intellectual. Or can it? A recent exhibition at Sandroni.Rey posits the question even as it seems to answer it. Light and shadow turn inside out and around in a complex interplay of trompe l'oeil and collage in the works of Soo Kim and Mary Temple.

Although each artist presents an independent and unique body of work, the pairing adds depth and resonance to them both. Los Angeles-based Kim's three photographic collages are mounted on Plexi and collectively titled *They Stop Looking at the Sky*. Temple shows what is referred to as a light installation, but is more aptly understood as an intervention of the imagination or, less poetically, a site-specific wall painting. All of the works examine presence and absence, inside and outside, real and imagined, in

distinctive, thought provoking ways. In addition, it is a particularly beautiful exhibition.

Kim's three collages search to define the experience of being in two places at once, a body and a mind, an individual and a collective, inside and outside. Each collage utilizes color photographs of a city (primarily Istanbul, but many cities collide within them) to create an unceasing tableau of buildings which moves seamlessly from interiors to exteriors in jagged, geometric rows, without pausing for air. A clothesline hangs from stair to rooftop, crossing over an alley below, a shack above and a white abyss. A family relaxes on the edge of a roof, one man stands on nothing, and yet this seems perfectly plausible within the constraints of the picture. Perspective is flattened into the questionable vista of memory. In two of these dizzying explorations, black-

and-white line drawings multiply the effect; an Islamic inspired pattern covers many surfaces in the first and octopus-like blossoms sprout between corners and across planes on the third. In the center collage, accents of blue and orange, including colorful scenes of sky and trees, inhabit small corners of the crisscross city, and expanses of white take on the fantastical quality of new fallen snow.

What is it to be inside the compressed and seasick spaces of these urban/nature/art landscapes? If their hopeful iconoclasm is any indication, the experience is less congested and violent than contemporary cosmopolitan living and more akin to the space we occupy in our heads, neither in nor out, but some-

where beyond the need to conform to the laws of physics.

Although the title informs, "they stop looking at the sky," these quixotic cities are full with the metaphorical sky of daydream and possibility. Yet in the ornate patterns and disconnected buildings there is an echo of struggle, war and the current pained relations between Islam and the West. Rather than through direct visual manifestation, the artist channels the shadow of knowledge through which we view these patterns, these buildings, this present. With their mix of new construction and constant repair, organic growths that overtake the structures as if by force and ornate patterning, *They Stop Looking at the Sky* powerfully and disarmingly thwarts assumptions of our most basic beliefs about safety, beauty and borders.

Temple's installation plumbed similar depths with the levity of apartment-white paint applied minimally and nearly unnoticeably to the wall. A shadow from a tree outside stretched across one side of the

gallery, filling the space as grandly and nimbly as sunlight. But a second glance revealed that there was neither window nor shady tree; they were a flickering projection made from latex paint expertly applied in the guise

of light. The ability to reflect what is physically absent with such profundity is as much daydream as nightmare, a trick of the eyes that soon betrays the artifice and ability of the mind to both portray and project with uncanny reality what may or may not be present. But analyses come later, with reflection. On viewing, Temple's installation is as relaxing and rejuvenating as sun. And beauty, whether real or its echo, trumps analysis.

Sunlight, easing calmly through the green leaves of a shady tree, is a more accessible and less complex concept of beauty than that of art. Temple's piece evoked and relied on this notion, without simplifying its complexities. As in Kim's impossible cities, what is absent in the shadows informs the light.

—Annie Buckley

Soo Kim, *Mary Temple: Photographs and Light Installation* closed in February at Sandroni.Rey, Los Angeles.

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